

OBITUARY

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# Obituary: Professor Dr. Bernhard F. Dietzschold (1940 – 2022)

Jürgen A. Richt<sup>1\*</sup>, Zhen F. Fu<sup>2,3</sup> and on behalf of many friends and colleagues



We share with great sadness that our long-time friend and colleague, Prof. Dr. Bernhard Dietzschold, passed away surrounded by his family on May 2, 2022, at the age of 81. With the passing of Bernhard Dietzschold, the worldwide virology and infectious disease community is losing an eminent representative who has shaped the scientific landscape of its discipline for decades.

Bernhard obtained his veterinary degree from the University of Giessen in 1965. After completing his DVM, he went on to further pursue a graduate degree in microbiology and virology at the University of Tübingen in 1968. He then worked as a veterinary scientist at

the Bundesforschungsanstalt für Viruserkrankungen der Tiere (Federal Institute for Viral Diseases of Animals) in Tübingen. He moved his family and research to the United States in 1980 to the Wistar Institute in Philadelphia, PA, in order to pursue his research in molecular pathogenesis of rabies. Later on, in 1992, he moved his research to the Thomas Jefferson University also in Philadelphia, to further develop novel vaccines and immune therapeutics for rabies and other virus infections of the central nervous system. He held this position until his retirement in 2013.

Bernhard's work encompassed both, fundamental research on the pathogenesis and immune responses of neurotropic viruses as well as its application to develop vaccines and therapeutics. In the earlier years, he mapped many of the immunogenic epitopes on rabies virus antigens. He developed many mouse and human monoclonal antibodies, some of which are presently in production in China and India for post-exposure treatment for people who are suspected to be exposed to rabies. He was also involved in developing an oral rabies vaccine for wildlife, which has been used in numerous countries. In his later years, he delineated the immune mechanisms involved in rabies virus clearance from the central nervous system. Prof. Dr. Dietzschold obtained many patents for novel vaccines and therapeutics, published more than 200 peer-reviewed manuscripts in academic journals including *Science*, *PNAS*, *Journal of Virology* and others, served on numerous grant reviews for the NIH, and worked as a subject matter expert for the WHO and CDC advising on emerging zoonoses.

Bernhard was a lifelong avid gardener, and it did not come as a surprise to any of his colleagues, friends and family, that he pursued his love of gardening in his own

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backyard before and after his retirement. There, he created a delicate ecosystem of flowering plants, vegetable and berry gardens, as well as a paradise for the birds and insects which are so vital to our environment. It was this sanctuary that won him multiple blue ribbons with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. Perhaps most important for him was having instilled this love and knowledge of gardening in his children, and especially his grandchildren.

Bernhard was an intellectual leader in his field for many decades. His death weighs heavily on our hearts and minds as we all will miss this outstanding and visionary scientist, this supportive mentor and advisor, and this humorous, and generous person that he was until the very end.

Our deepest and sincere sympathy goes out to his wife Renate, their daughters Marie-Luise and Johanna, and the entire extended Dietzschold family. Our sincere gratitude to Bernhard Dietzschold whose science and personality have shaped our careers and lives.

#### Authors' contributions

The authors read and approved the final manuscript

#### Declarations

#### Consent for publication

Written informed consent was obtained from participant's wife to publish the human images.

#### Competing interests

The authors have no other competing interests.

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